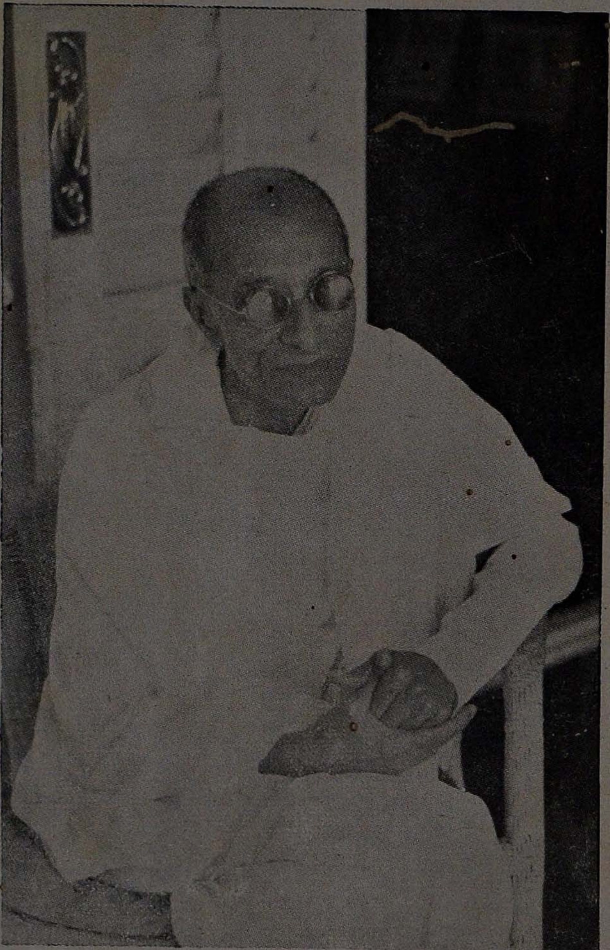
THESE 18 MONTHS

By
NILKAN PERUMAL

A brief Review of the Working of the Madras Congress Ministry during the Eighteen Months—from July 1937 to December 1938.



The Hon. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari

THESE EIGHTEEN MONTHS

BY

NILKAN PERUMAL

"It is the duty and function of every one now to dissect us. The programme of the public mind is now dissection"

C. R.

T. D. GOPAL
48, GENERAL PATTERS ROAD
MADRAS

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PREFACE

FOR over fifty years the Indian National Congress has laboured to attain the freedom of India. Great intellectual giants like Sir Surendranath Banerjee, Sir Phirozesha Mehta, Sir Sankaran Nair conducted this Movement. Their voices were heard and received by the masses favourably. People therefore lent them support to carry on the Movement.

To-day, India has a substantial measure of Self-Government in as much as a Council of Ministers chosen by the will of the Legislature functions in the eleven Provinces in British India. Seven are Congress Cabinets. In two other Provinces the Congress' influence through coalition of political Parties predominates. Thus, the Congress which is the biggest political organization of the Indians sways supreme its influence in the rule of almost all British India.

In Madras, a Congress Ministry with an absolute party majority functions. But the fact that the Congress is a people's organization need not deter any one from critically analyzing the Congress Government's work in the Southern Province.

For long, I have been asked by friends from outside India as well as in India itself as to what I thought of the working of the Congress Ministry in Madras, especially because our Premier the Hon'ble Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar, is counted as one of the cleverest of men in this country. To such letters I have sent occasional replies but then the demand was made to put my views in print. Hence this book.

I have absolutely no party spirit in writing this book. I am one of those who rejoiced at the Congress assuming ruling powers because the Congressmen represented the people much more than any other party in this country. But as I see the way the Congress Ministry conducts affairs in the Madras Province, I feel that their place is outside the administrative office and the legislatures if at all their good name should last in history. That the Ministers have been working with the best of intentions at heart, there need not be any doubt. But in office, they have proved not altogether successful. At the same time, many of their legislative measures bear marks of failure.

One Madras Minister described himself and his colleagues early last year as "Babies in the art of Government". The British Rulers of our land have been saying the same all along to delay transfer of political power into our hands. And yet the Indian "Babe" cried too much and the British, in order to avoid the nuisance of the crying infant, parted with a little of the vast political power they hold in their hands and now watch the 'joke'. The 'joke' is a huge one and the British amuse themselves. In the meantime, I shall tell the reader what the 'joke' has been for the past eighteen months. My purpose in doing this is merely to mirror the common feelings shared by a large section of the educated people in South India to-day.

MADRAS,
3rd January 1939.

N. P.

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THESE EIGHTEEN MONTHS

"Don't take it ill, I beseach you, if I speak my thoughts without disguise and with truth and freedom"

Socrates.

THESE EIGHTEEN MONTHS

'THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE'

I sat on the balcony of my cottage and viewed the Street Procession. Banners, placards, music, about a hundred men passed before me. They cried slogans, sang Tamil songs and shouted " jais " for this man and that. " Vote for Congress " they cried in tones so loud and mechanical.

After several years of stay outside the Motherland this was the first Indian political procession I was witnessing. My feelings were roused. I felt happy about the spirit which dominated these individuals who cried out slogans patriotically and profusely. I raised my hat off to these men who thus paraded before me. India was now a Nation, steadily marching ahead on the road to political progress, I was fully convinced. I sincerely wished the processionists and their cause great success and glory.

Yes, the election craze was in full swing that season. The year was 1936 and the month, December. Now and then a youngman clad in articles of apparel made of coarse white cloth used to peep into our cottage and distribute leaflets soliciting our vote for the " Congress Candidate ". I got amused, for, I have no vote in this land of mine, not even the literacy vote

though I read and write two occidental and three Indian languages. "I have no vote to give any one", I used to plead with the canvasser for the Congress candidate. But he would not believe me. He thought I was evading him with an excuse. Any amount of explanation never convinced him. The joke went on for some time. No other party candidate ever approached me as much. Others let things to destiny perhaps. The Congress Party strained every nerve towards a victory and got it, even more than its expectations, once the results of the elections were announced.

To both the legislatures they got an elephant-like majority of Congressmen elected. Their good work in canvassing and using every available means of persuation worked out this miracle for them. On seeing such a result I began making enquiries in order to undertake a study of their election work. I got many facts revealed, facts which interested me much.

The Congressmen had issued their election pledge to the masses, a pretty long document telling people what they, if elected to the legislatures, would do for the country. The newspapers published it and readers must have seen it. Those who cannot read the papers were told by village congress orators in some places what the election pledges of Congressmen were. But the masses voted for the Congress largely not because they attached any importance to the election pledges but they had to yield to other influences. It is the mere persuasive power of the well-organized body of Congressmen that secured victory for them in the elections. Illiterate

Voters were told that Gandhji wanted them to vote for Congress and the Mahatma's name worked miracles. Gandhiji is still supposed to be a religious leader by a great number of South Indians for whom religion is life itself. Well organised meetings, paid canvassers, sufficient funds (because the Congress has large funds collected throughout India from the rich, poor and middle class men) helped the Congress in the elections. South Indians being musical-minded, the Queen of Song Sundarambal was taken from spot to spot to secure support for the Congress. When a stage-star of her stamp whose theatrical shows are usually costly gave free performances on Congress platforms, crowds gathered. To these gatherings, she made fervent appeals for support to Congressmen in the elections. The Singer's appeal was well responded to. Sardar Patel, the *Dalai Lama* of the All-India Congress Working Committee himself toured South India during the elections to help matters.

The opponents of the Congress party were weak. The Justice Party had been torn to pieces long before the election season by disloyalty among its partymen. It depended on one or two individuals for funds but then the available funds were wasted by unscrupulous types of Justicites. On the face of the magnificently organized Congress Party, the Justicites were nowhere. Again many Justicites deserted their party at the election time and joined hands with the Maharaja of Pithapuram, who started a new Political Party perhaps to contest the elections. This new division among those who opposed the Congress also incidentally helped it to victory. All

things considered, the star of the Congress Party was steadily on the ascent while that of its opponents was towards an eclipse in the year 1936. Thus we see that the election victory of the Congress is due to the well-organised appeal to the masses, the majority of which cared little or nothing for any political principles. An election won this way need not be taken as significant. Nevertheless, it is a fight well won. So when Congress Ministers these days talk about that they are creatures by the 'popular will of the people', I wonder whether they are not in fact creatures by the will of a majority of people who gave their votes in the name of Gandhiji without in the least considering the soundness of the Political programme of the Congress in the legislatures. Things are bound to be as such as long as the level of literacy remains low in our country. But what amuses me often is to hear the Congress Ministers talk that they embody the "will of the people". The question then is "What sort of people"?

'GOOD SET OF WORKERS' ARRIVE

Having obtained a great majority in both the Legislatures the Congress Party was ready to form the Ministry in Madras. One hundred and sixty-one Congressmen are members in the Legislative Assembly whose total seats come to two hundred and fifteen. The Council has twenty-eight Congressmen in the fifty-five seats. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was given dictatorial powers by his fellow-Congress legislators to form the Ministry just as he liked. When all was set for the formation of the Ministry, a trial of strength exhibition by the Congress took place. Mr. Rajagopalachari, according to the orders of the Congress Grand Council (Working Committee) manoeuvered and declined to form the Ministry saying that he wanted an assurance that the Reserve Powers of the Governor should not be used. This was a condition for accepting office. No such assurance was easy for H. E. Lord Erskine to give. And he of course gave no such assurance in writing. For six weeks the Congressmen wrote articles to the papers, spoke from platforms and abused the British Nation. The British Rulers calmly studied the situation and continued to say what they had been saying from the very outset that it was none of the intention of the Governors to interfere with the acts of a Ministry each and every day in its working. Finding that no good purpose would be served by their remaining outside and leaving the Interim Ministers to work on. Congressmen finally

began moving in the right direction. But the Congress Working Committee wanted to "save face". So the "Committee" instructed the Congress Party leaders in each province that they should satisfy themselves personally that the Governor's interference would not crop up in the day to day work of the Ministry should office be accepted. We do not know anything about the actual assurance these Governors gave the Congress Premiers but I believe that they merely repeated what they had been saying all along, that even according to the Government of India Act, 1935, their interference comes only when grave issues of administrative policy are raised. The whole controversy over the Governor's Reserve Powers put up by the Congressmen was a first rate judy show, worthy of no sane political group.

In Madras Mr. Rajagopalachari formed the Cabinet on July 14, 1937, with himself as Premier. The Andhras insisted for a fairly good representation of their men in the Ministry. Mr. Rajagopalachari had to yield. So three of the ten Ministers in his Cabinet come from the Andhradesa. One Vaishnavite Brahmin, One Malayalee, One Harijan, Two Non-Brahmin Tamils and a Moslem Constitute the rest of the Ministers. These Ministers are the Hon. Mr. S. Ramanathan, Hon. Mr. V. V. Giri, Hon. Dr. T. S. S. Rajan, Hon. Dr. S. Subbaroyan Hon. Mr. Raman Menon, Hon. T. Prakasam, Hon. Mr. Muniswamy Pillai, Hon. Mr. Yakub Hasan and Hon. Mr. Gopal Reddy. No Christian was given any chance and Mr. Rajagopalachari said that the minority interests were safe in Congressmen's hands.

This "Good set of workers" as the Premier calls his Ministers are responsible for the administration of Madras, it is stated. But in truth, the real ruling powers are in the hands of Mr. Rajagopalachari who idolizes Adolf Hitler from platform to platform in his speeches on the face of the Nationalist Press attacking the Furher for his aggressive ways in European Politics. The other Ministers have their differences with the Premier in spite of his telling us that all of them form a "happy family". It is no longer a Cabinet Secret. Everyone knows about it and as such, I betray no secret by writing it. And we will not be surprised if any one of the ten Ministers suddenly hands over his resignation in order to vindicate his self respect before the Ministerial caravan completes its contemplated five years' journey.

The Congress has been fighting for democratic principles and toleration of personal views, it was stated. But in Madras the ways of a Dictator is faithfully upheld by the Premier.

The appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries was done according to tradition and perhaps to please certain favoured individuals in the Congress ranks. What work these Parliamentary Secretaries who are well paid, actually do heaven knows, except sometimes answering questions in the Assembly. At least, one of them, Mr. K. R. Karant had the boldness to say that he had no work to do in office and resign his position.

VICTIMS OF THE 'FILE DISEASE'

I sat on the beach sands one evening and was going through a little book in hand. Yonder sat two men, wearing dhoti, cap and coat. They had each an umbrella in hand. They were talking about their day's work in office. Their conversation rather interested me. So I lent my ears to their talk. They took no notice of me and continued :

> "These Congress Ministers know nothing about the files which go into their hands" said one of them.
>
> "To-day we were all amused about the remarks of the Minister for...... over a file. Most files go to them for signatures and we get back only signatures! In some of them, they unnecessarily alter certain words here and there. That is all. I do not know why the Minister should waste his time, as long as he fails to understand the contents of the files".
>
> "The same in my department to" joined the other.

Those who conversed between themselves were clerks employed in the Secretariat I believe. But I have been hearing the same comments from scores of other employees in Government service. As such the men on the beach sands were also telling only unvarnished truth, I thought.

I do not think that a Cabinet Minister in any well advanced democratic country goes through hundreds of office files every day and waste his time. He only sees

to very important matters. The rest is dealt with the Permanent Under Secretary in each department. But here the system has been so made up all these years that these Ministers have to waste much time on all kinds of files leaving very little time for any original thinking or to plan-out schemes to better the lot of the people. The Congress Ministers are also victims to this *File Disease*. They are perhaps in no mood to rely on the Premanent Under Secretary of the Department concerned to handle the files !

Most of the files they handle relate to transfer of staff, leave petitions, reports and so on. There are few files on vital questions which ought to be gone through by the Minister to shape his departmental policies.

Further, their time at the Secretariat is also taken up by a series of interviews given to their Partymen and Civilians. To non-congressmen, these Ministers are usually reluctant to grant interviews. And interviews are supposed to be granted between the hours of half-past nine and eleven. So says a signboard. But seldom a Minister is in his seat before twelve o'clock !

Everytime I had been to see a Minister, I dreaded the sight of his chaprosy. His expectant eyes to raise a nickel out of my pocket made me feel uneasy. Not that I personally mind giving the poorly-paid wretch a nickel but I do not like the way he takes it from me. He forces on you his demand in all ways but threats by word of mouth. Charity began at home no doubt but the Ministers have not instructed their peons to be decent with the visitors even at their very office doors.

LOYAL SERVICES.

The popular Governor of Madras Lord Erskine while inaugurating Provincial Autonomy by his first address to a Joint Session of the Madras Legislatures in August 1937 exhorted the Services to faithfully serve the Ministry in power. Whichever Ministry was in power, the duty of the Services was to carry out the orders of the Executive, he said. The services have taken this advice with a fine feeling and have been faithful to it.

But it looks as if the Ministry would soon alienate the good feelings of the services too. Further reduction of salaries in their ranks would be a suicidal step. All-round salary cuts are again contemplated in the next Budget of the Government, I hear. If that be so, the services will very much resent such a step. The Ministry cannot touch a pie that is due to the Indian Civil Service men. That matter is entirely in the hands of the Secretary of State. Only the Provincial Service men would fall victims to reductions in salaries. It was not long ago that I questioned a poorly paid Government servant as to what he would do if a certain percentage in his salary was cut. Quick came the reply.

> "If the Government fail to understand that it is wrong to cut the salaries of their hard working servants, well, we have other means to earn. We will get money outside to make up. Even honest men would be forced to become corrupt."

No one wants a corrupt rank of Public servants in South India. Already we have a sprinkling of them. Take any Government Department and examine, you will find traces of corruption and bribery here and there. It is so well known. Why give room for the growth of this evil further? Let the services be spared. Their co-operation is very essential for the existence of the Congress Ministry or any other. As such, a satisfied permanent service means a healthy Government, which fact the Congress Ministry should not ignore.

Mr. Rajagopalachari has not been wanting in complimenting the services from time to time. Mr. Dixon, the Collector of Salem, who sends commendable reports on the working of Prohibition in good humour has been awarded a mead of praise by the Ministers. Similarly, all the Civilians who express passionate admiration for the activities of the Ministers are in return flattered time and again. But one cannot understand the type of flattery which Mr. Rajagopalachari offers to the services when he said at Mangalore thus:

> "The Permanent Services and We (Congress Ministers?) together can fight all those who stand against our progress".

Now who are these people who stand against the Ministry's Progress? Does he mean the Justicites who are opponents of the Congress? If not who else? But the Services know that under the Justice Ministry and Dr. Subbaroyan's so called "Independent" Ministry in the Montford Reform years, the Services had n .

grievances, no grave fears regarding loss of service or cuts in salary, as under the Congress Ministry now.

The Services know their duty well and would help the executive to the best they can. But on no account should the Ministry harm the interests of the services by adopting any quixotic measures against them.

OUR PARLIAMENT

One day in September 1937 I went to see the Madras Legislative Assembly in session at the old Senate House by the Marina. Soon after I took my seat in the Visitors' gallery I found a lady member singing a song. The first thought I then had was that of an opera house or a broadcasting chamber. Soon, I made sure that I was sitting only in the Legislative Assembly House with a Congress Government in power. The Business of the House began with no other unusual feature to mark the occasion. I believe that they have no more any singing performances in the House as a result of the Moslem resentment to the *Vande-Mataram* song.

The visitors' gallery was full. Why, I do not know. From what I could understand, the crowd there was more interested in seeing those much-advertised men in South India who go by the name of "M. L. As."! I might have been perhaps in the wrong but then I got the idea that the visitors were more keen on amusement than on any actual observation of the working of the Assembly.

In the distinguished visitors' gallery, there was in truth no distinguished South Indian at all. Even in the speakers' gallery I could see no man of distinction, except Mr. G. A. Natesan, the grey-haired former Sheriff of Madras, though there were few others present besides.

I gazed at the sea of heads in the huge chamber. The Ministerial Benches first attracted me. Premier

Rajagopalachari sat there all the time perusing through files. Firmly fixed to his seat he gave me the impression that even here, his hunger for hard work was insatiable. But at times, his attention from the files was attracted by an active Parliamentary Secretary or a fellow Minister in doubt over some question. The Premier seemed to give his ear to the speaker on his legs and his eye to the files he placed on his lap.

Messrs. Prakasam and Yakub Hasan sat there unmoved like worthy images, silent and stately-looking. Mr. Gopal Reddy, the boyish-looking Minister for Local Administration reclined on the bench in leisurely fashion, smiling and conversing with a man who sat by his side. Messrs. Ramanathan, Raman Menon and Muniswamy Pillai too were seen chatting all the time between themselves. Mr. Giri was more often away from his seat than in it. Dr. Subbaroyan moved around the Council hall, wisecracking with a number of members of the House. He went out often, wandered through the corridors of the building, smoked cigarette after cigarette and conversed with any man who came his way. Dr. Rajan walked into the House at half-past four that day, though the proceedings commenced exactly at three.

Most members of the Assembly do anything but follow a speaker on his legs. The European Members were studious looking, grave and strictly business-like. They either studied files or listened to the Member who was speaking. Rarely they went out, perhaps for a little free air or for smoking a cigarette.

Legislative Assembly in Session

Men like Sir William Wright, Mr. W. K. M. Langley, Mr. G. E. Walker made brief but commendable speeches to which the House listened with great regard.

The Indian Members of the House were seen busy circulating chits from one end to the other, a number of peons aiding them by carrying these chits round. They were also having merry conversation.

The lady Members of the House were seated on the Eastern wing of the House. When the business commenced all of them were not in. Suddenly one by one, they came in and rushed up to their seats. Now all were attention. A new energy was seen sweeping over the House. The lady-Members too were all the time engaged in cheerful conversation. They mostly were silent spectators in the Assembly and contributed little or nothing towards the proceedings in the House.

Many interesting scenes occur in the Assembly. One day a Minister was seen asleep on his seat for a few minutes. An Opposition member put a question to the Minister who was dozing off. His Parliamentary Secretary tried to wake him up. No use

> "Chal! what question! question! Here, no questions!" he replied murmering and continued to doze on.

On another occasion a Christian Member of the Opposition told a Congress Christian legislator thus :

> "Look, when I speak on the question, I shall say that you, a Congress Party Christian also agree with me on the point".

"No, never" came the sharp protest.

"You should not say anything as such" thundered the Congress Christian M. L. A.

"Even if I am seen talking with you, a Justicite, Mr. Rajagopalachari would misunderstand me"!

I wonder what sort of a Legislature this Madras Assembly is! Its members form an interesting variety. There is not a single language which all of them understood. Let me quote here what Dr. Pattabi Seetharamayya, an ardent Congressman has to say in the course of a letter to the Editor of the *Indian Express* last year:

"Only a hundred members of the Assembly or even less than that can be said to have between themselves a mutually understood tongue, namely English. The remaining one hundred and fifteen—Heaven alone knows—how they can understand one another. The plain fact is that they don't. The ten Malayalees are in blissful or curseful ignorance of Kanarese and Telugu—and even of Tamil. The ten Kanarese are in no better position. The seventy Telugus don't understand a bit of Tamil, Malayalam, and Kanarese. The seventy are happier situated. Fourteen of these seventy Tamil representatives are themselves Telugus and therefore they may understand Telugu speeches, but the rest of their Tamil colleagues do not understand much of Telugu or Kanarese and even of Malayalam. What is the result? In the Assembly where we presume that there is a mutually understood tongue, seventy Telugus do not understand the language of the remaining one hundred and forty-five. Fifty-six (70 Tamils minus 14 Telugu knowing Tamil members) Tamils do not understand the language of one hundred and forty-five members while seventy Tamils do not understand the language of one

hundred and thirty (145—16=129) members. The ten Malayalees as well as the ten Kanarese do not understand the lauguage of 205 members. You may say that if they speak in English some of them understand one another. They do. Less than a hundred are able to do so. Then, would you leave out of account the remaining 105 members as unworthy of reckoning, who have got only hands, no heads or hearts? Pray, let us cast off old ideas and be alive to and sensible of the fact that we are working, pardon me, combating Provincial Autonomy".

The language used in the Assembly is sometimes very strange. I quote an example here. Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari, a promising member of the Assembly wanted to know what particular qualifications the Minister of Public Information had to hold the job. Mr. Krishnamachari wished Mr. Ramanathan to be a Gobbels but finding the Tamil Minister far short of the level, questioned his work in the Ministry. Mr. Ramanathan answered Mr. Krishnamachari after several minutes had elapsed saying that

"The Government and the Press had been now-a-days drawn together as on no other occasion and that was his claim to be a Publicity Minister".

Mr. Ramanathan added:

"I do not want to say anything about my qualifications. I admit I had no journalistic or publicity experience. I have not sold *nostrums* or *shoddy stuffs* nor did publicity in the sense in which the merchants would understand it"!

The leader of the Opposition, Kumaraja Muthia Chettiar interrupted the Minister and wanted to know

whether Mr. Ramanathan was not casting reflections personally on Mr. Krishnamachari, who is the representative of the South Indian Chamber of Commerce (an organization of merchants) in the Assembly. But the Minister said that he referred only to the Merchant Community !

The statement of Mr. Ramanathan was resented by Mr. Krishnamachari, it was stated. For days together he felt the Minister's sting as a personal attack. Then one day Mr. Krishnamachari who is the Madras Agent for *Pears Soap* went up to the Public Information Ministry and pulled out the Minister to the Balcony and showed him an aeroplane on its wings soaring high. With the gas coming out of its tail, the pilot wrote on the sky the words "Pears Soap" as a novel form of advertisement.

> "There," said Mr. Krishnamachari to Mr. Ramanathan pointing out to the plane "that is how I do my publicity"!

Their cordial relations were renewed once again. But the Parliamentary language of the Minister is really astonishing.

Once a Congressman stood up to talk and he did talk something which the Congress Party did not like. Soon he was reminded of "Congress descipline" by a fellow-Party man whereupon he sat down without speaking any further !

The Proceedings of the Assembly in session are mirrored to our benefit by a brilliant writer in the

Madras Mail, styling himself "Sam Pepys Jnr." They provide a wide range of information as to what happens within the walls of the Assembly Chamber. It is eminently a readable piece of writing. With apologies to the writer and the *Mail*, I reprint the following from "Sam Pepy's Diary" for November 30, 1938:

> "Anon I looking upon the faces of the Congressmen did sudinly realise (and lackwitted of me that I had not noticed it before) how they sit all discomforted through the speeches of the Opposites, awondering how in the world all shall be answered, and then when Mr. Prime Minister doth ingeniously plead, all do smile and wagg their heads as to say; Aha! We knew it all the time; bully boys are we. Yet truly all do sitt waiting to be told what they should think and how reason.
>
> "Later come Mr. Y. Hussein, again, at great pains to show that not withstanding all the Cabinet be jointly responsible for all that Government doth, yett each Minister (and especially Mr. Y. Hussein) doth do his own work and brook no interference from the others. Whereat loud laughter from his party men and colleagues; I know not why.
>
> "In the end, the House doth divide 82 against 18. So that of a House of 215 members but 101 present (the one being Mr. Speaker). And I did note that of the Justice Party, which fancies itself to lead the Opposites to Government, but four were present, out of their full 17. Methinks I cease to marvel at the dekay of this party that three-fourths of its members be absent from voting upon so important a matter."

Of all the Members in the House I can talk of none with any particular interest. But I must say a line

about the leader of the Opposition. I watched him keenly all the time. When his turn came, he spoke out his views clearly, thereby, maintaining his dignified position.

Sir Pannirselvam is an important member of the House. He was keenly listening to the proceedings throughout. He spoke well too.

Speaker Sambamurthy is an impressive person, who attracted every eye. His bust figure seen over the desk is remarkable.

There is nothing commendable about the speeches in the House. In fact there is no Indian Member who could make a masterly speech here. Long-winding, dull and uninteresting oratory still persists. The speakers seem to be taking pride in quoting knotty statistics and conditions which prevailed in Madras during the rule of Queen Victoria as the basis of their assertions.

In the huge Chamber michrophones are fitted to make the speeches audible but then the appartus is not fitted properly. The result is that not a single speech is heard well in the galleries. The echo produced in the hall made it worse. Further, many speakers themselves ought to have undergone a course of study in radio-speaking before facing the *Mike*, I thought.

When I went out of the hall to light a cigarette, I observed a few men under shady trees, listening to the speeches coming through the loud-speaker fitted in the lawn. Their faces showed that they were there in the

Kumararajah Muthia Chettiar

same mood in which they would stand near the Acquarium on the Marina and listen to some musical piece broadcasted from a Radio-station. But here, they rather heard the speeches better than they could within the Assembly chamber itself.

The Congress Members in the House were looking confident, courageous, cheerful and at ease. Their elephant-like majority had made them as such, perhaps. But the non-Congress Members sat there like children compelled to school with unwilling hearts. They spoke for no result to their satisfaction, they moved motions which were always thrown out, they argued points which became controversial between the Chair and themselves. But then I wonder why not the Europeans, Christians, Moslem Leaguers, Independent Moslems, the Harijans and the Justicites who sit in Opposition jointly work within the legislatures putting up a united front to the Congress?

Sportsmanlike attitude on the part of the Party in power seemed to be entirely absent in the proceedings of the House. And yet we are told that a Parliamentary Democracy is at work in Madras.

The Legislative Council is somewhat a better constituted House in as much as we have a few eminent men of South India there. Men like the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Dr. P. J. Thomas, Sir K. V. Reddy, Mr. N. R. Samiappa Mudaliar (the leader of the Opposition), Dr. C. R. Reddy, all contribute much to keep up the dignity of the House. Even here,

the Congress majority goes on. As such, the views of these able men who put up good debating and speaking performances in the House never bring forth any good result. They know it as much as any one else. The more they became convinced that there is no good in taking any active part in the proceedings of the House, the less they make effective speeches these days. At this rate we have to seriously consider whether there is after all any practical necessity to continue the Upper House in Madras! Perhaps the provision for it in the Government of India Act is the only justification ?

EXPERIMENTS IN LEGISLATION

No good government in the world would ever go on so rapidly passing legislations of all kinds as the Congress Government in Madras. They say that what they have now done are measures "long overdue". And that is why they had to be so quick in passing a series of legislations at lightning-speed. Most of these *Acts* they have passed are very unsound and radical. The way these *Acts* are worked to-day shows how they are very impractical also. Is it because "Lawyers and Judges are not the best legislators" as the Premier himself believes?

The Debt Relief Act is aimed to benefit the agriculturist and India's agriculturists are largely debtors. Those who lent money to the South Indian peasant has lost much by the coming of this Act. It has also alienated the good relitionship between the lender and the borrower. In times of need the poor agriculturist got help from the rich sowcar in the village. But now-a-days none would lend money so easily. If the agriculturist dies after enjoying the boons this Act confers on him, he is saved. For him to live on, is to continue a more miserable life. "The Debt Relief Bill has already done some good" said Mr. Rajagopalachari in a speech and note the word "some". He himself is not convinced that it is a measure conferring any wholesome good on the agriculturist. Further, the Act has been pronounced as *ultra vires* in some of our District Courts of judicature.

Had the Act been drafted in a better way by which neither the lender nor the borrower got any cause to feel badly about it, it would have become popular.

I once heard a good story from a Tamil orator who was speaking against the Congress Policy of all-round taxation and the Debt Relief Bill. He said:

> "A pregnant peasant woman wanted help in a village for the delivery of her baby, for it was a difficult maternity case. Her husband went to the native doctor of the place to ask for medical aid. But the doctor said: 'Pay me my fee first. In the past I could have come freely. Now-a-days I have to pay a license fee to Government and I want money."
>
> "The peasant moved on to the hospital and called on the Alopathic physician who too refused saying 'I have no salary. I am an Honorary Medical man under the Congress regime. So if I go out of the hospital to treat cases, I want some money. Pay me, I shall come.'
>
> "The troubled peasant walked away from the hospital. To pay for medical aid he had no money. But he hoped to get it from the village money-lender who usually helped the needy. Now when the peasant made his demand for Rs. 50 the sowcar refused saying:
>
> 'I cannot lend money in this Congress regime. You know under the Debt Relief Bill I stand to lose the money I give.'!
>
> "Now the peasant was back home only to find his wife dead for want of timely medical aid. He buried her. He also decided to bury the 'yellow box' of the Congress during the next elections"!

I was quite amused to hear this stroy but it appeals to the masses of South India as gospel, perhaps. This way, the opponents of the Congress regime continue to attack the Ministry and their legislative measures.

II

One Act of the Madras Ministry which received world-wide notice was Prohibition enforcement in the Premier's native District of Salem. We have known about alcohol consumption since the beginning of the world. Reformers have not been wanting to preach about the evils of drink. A mighty land like the United States tried to root out the evil by the Volstead Act. Finland also tried the experiment. But both these countries are to-day apologists for the zealous step they took.

I have personal knowledge of the working of Prohibition in the United States. There were more people violating the Act than those observing it in that 'God's own country' was the impression I gained. All the billions of dollars spent in checking the bootleg trade were waste. With strict control being enforced on bootleggers, crime began to spread. Even people who ordinarily respected Authority, soon lost all regard for the laws. Crime kings of the type of Jack Diamond and "Scar-face" Al-Capone are products of the Bootleg trade. The Volstead Act miserably failed in the United States after twelve years of fruitless enforcement. To-day the Americans can drink wines just as the people of any other country in Europe.

The 'women's organization for National Prohibition Reform' is one of the biggest institutions which carried on for long an agitation for total Prohibition. Its membership is said to be half a million. But once Prohibition came, this organization viewed its effects in the country with horror. In 1932, it was all for repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment (Volstead Act). Let us just see what Mrs. P. K. Sabin, its Chairman had to say about the American Experiment on Prohibition. She has stated :

> "When prohibition was first enacted I was in favour of it. I had two sons and I felt that for their benefit at least I should approve it. I was carried away. I fear, by the word-pictures of enthusiasts who depicted what the world would be like with no liquor in it.
>
> "It was not long before I discovered that these pictures were mirages. Moreover I began to see that whether my boys drank or not was my responsibility, not the government's. I realized that by prohibition I was endeavouring to shove off upon the government a job that was properly my own.
>
> "Do you honestly believe that prohibition ever stopped anybody who wanted liquor from getting it? I know it never has. This talk about saving the poor from drink is largely another product of the imagination of fervid drys. Our society has gone into this subject thoroughly. To begin with, in any number of humble houses stills now are being operated. Children see the law broken. There are more speakeasies in the neighbourhood of workmen's homes throughout the country than there ever were saloons.

"These statements are not made without knowledge; they are based on the results of investigations. Settlement workers all report that not only has drunkenness not decreased but has actually increased, and that among the young this increase is most marked. It sounds well to speak about the poor man who used to spend his money in saloons and now takes his family to the movies instead. But it is not so.

"Two-thirds of the women of Finland were in favour of the repeal of their prohibition law. Their vote alone would have been sufficient to repeal it. Do you believe for one moment that these were so-called 'smart' women, pleasure loving, empty-headed, addicted to cock-tails, or subsidized by the liquor interests? They were not; they were worried mothers and wives eager for the decent regulation of the communities in which they lived. That is the reason that they espoused the cause of prohibition repeal, and that is the reason that we women in America are working for the same result.

"What have the women in this country already effected? In forty-one States we have working organizations. One of the first arguments that the drys put forward was that women were all in favour of prohibition. Our organization has shown men that this is not so."

In Salem the Premier seems to have enforced the Prohibition Act with a vengence. In 1929 he tried the Prohibition experiment in the Tiruchengode Taluq. It proved a failure. Congressmen said that the Government did not help enough to make it a success. Now Mr. Rajagopalachari as the Premier enforces Prohibition throughout the Salem District. We have promising administrative reports periodically emanating from

official sources in Salem telling us how successfully Prohibition measures work wonders! We see the Congress Ministers telling people from spot to spot all about the benevolent results of the Prohibition Act. We see pictures of a changed Salem in Congress Exhibitions. Are we to be convinced then that what a mighty Government in U. S. A. could not do, the Congress Ministry in Madras has already accomplished? I for one, am skeptical. Call me a pessimist if you like but I am firm in saying that you cannot fully stamp out the drink evil from Salem.

I myself had been touring Salem after a few months the Act was introduced. I saw with my own eyes illicit stills in operation. They are controlled by men of wealth, also by the rough-necked jacks in the District. The police have a difficult task in meeting these bootleg kings of Salem. Graft is also alleged to be at the bottom.

I heard of a number of suicides in the district as the result of poor toddy addicts consuming stove-spirit instead, in a moment of depression due to inability to obtain liquor. There are others who keep 'sweet toddy' (which is permitted by law) under certain process and turn it into real toddy and then drink. I questioned a layman about the economic benefits of Prohibition. He said:

> "The talk of better savings among the poor is all nonsense. Formerly, if a poor labourer earned six annas a day he drank toddy for four annas and gave his wife the rest. Now he spends the two annas for bus fare to cross the Salem border and drink in the Coimbatore District"!

With all these short comings I do admit that the consciousness of the people on the evils of drink has been roused in Salem by the steady propaganda the Ministers and officials were carrying on. It is also true that a large number of poor men under fear of Authority and law have given up drink. But this result could have been better accomplished by a measure of gradual temperance instead of total prohibition. In that case we would not be creating a new set of criminals in the bootleg-leaders and a new trade in illicit liquor. We could also have saved the lives of several pitiable men who died by consuming stove-spirit as a substitute for liquor!

The ideal of Prohibition is great but if Mr. Rajagopalachari ever fully succeeds in seeing it a success in Salem, he would have then earned a place worthy of a Saint in the Calendar. In the meantime, we ought to tolerate his experiment with sympathy.

In the Madras Presidency one of the resourceful items of revenue to the Government comes from the liquor monopoly. Now Salem, Cuddapah and Chittoor, getting dry the total loss of revenue on account of that comes to forty-two lakhs a year. At the same time the liquor revenue in the border districts have increased considerably. This loss must be made up in the Government treasury somehow. Or, expenditure must be curtailed in some other direction. Mr. Rajagopalachari who is also handling the Finance Portfolio seems to be inclined to reduce the expenditure in the Budget. Some of the measures he has attempted

in this direction are faulty. For instance, a number of Government Schools and law courts are being closed hear. While the crying need of South India is education, more and more education, it is unwise to close public schools in order to reduce expenditure for a favourable budget. By closing schools and courts several teachers, lawyers and officials are deprived of a chance to make a living. Unemployment is increased as in the case of toddy tappers in Salem. Considering all these facts, I wonder whether Prohibition is after all the most crying need of the Province, especially at a time when adequate food and clothing is a problem yet to be solved. To say that people have more food and clothing through total Prohibition is a theory which no sane man will ever easily accept. Still, let us give the Premier a chance and see whether he is really made of the "clay" of which he claims himself to be made.

III

Reduction of land revenue and general taxation is a pledge of Congressmen during their election campaign. But on assuming office, the Madras Ministry has been increasing taxation. I do not know whether this is due to the utter inexperience of the Premier in handling problems of public finance or the previous non-congress Government left the position in a muddle. Personally I am of the opinion that the Premier is in great confusion while dealing with the tough question of public finance. Hence the additional all-round taxation of the public. This is being done under the cover of the excuse that the Provincial Revenue suffers on account of the Revenue

from drink being lost. This is a strange argument which Congressmen often tell us.

A tax on the Indian manufactured mill-cloth is a folly. By this, the Government hope to give an impetus to Khadder (hand-spun and hand-loom woven cloth) about which the less said the better. In the first budget of the Congress Ministry, two lakhs were set apart for improvement of the hand-loom industry. While all the world thinks that the happiness of man depends on co-operative efforts, machinery, easier production, cheap prices and a higher standard of life, Gandhiji wants us to believe on individualism ! Khadder is the best example for it. We adopt a western system of Government, language, mode of living, thoughts, acts. But in industrial matters alone why should we be individualistic and seek to retire to the dark ages ? We want machinery for our progress and to throw aside machinery would be suicidal. Mr. S. Ramanathan, the Madras Publicity Minister thinks :

> " If we are petulant and discard machinery we shall simply cease to exist. Indians will become extinct as a Nation ".

This is a correct view of looking at our progress. Khadder can never solve India's clothing or any other problem. Even all our Congress Ministers should have consciously felt as such, I hope. Still, why the Madras Ministry should spend the tax-payer's money to revive

this unenterprising measure, no one can understand. To quote Minister Ramanathan again, former Secretary of the All-India Spinners Association, as to what he thought of Khadder :

> " I made a sincere attempt to work the khadi programme and if to-day I speak against khadi, I venture to do so because I discover after long and arduous practice that khadi does not work. The spinning wheel is dead, in fact it died sometime before Mr. Gandhi made the attempt to give it artificial respiration. Its proper place is the museum and you can no more give it life than you can give life to the many dry-bones in the museum "!

Still, the Madras Ministry wants to give life to khadi on the face of taxing the dealers of Mill-cloth made in India ! Because of the increased taxes, the price of the mill cloth goes up. The poorman has to pay more. But he is not going to change to khadi for that matter. The other taxations all round are astonishing. A license fee for practitioners of Indian Medicine, additonal fee for those who apply for jobs through the Public Service Commission, increased fee on Registration of documents, all these have been made further sources of revenue to the Government. Again a tax on death, marriage and electricity is contemplated, it is said.

Where is the election pledge of the Congress that they intend reducing taxation ? Instead of reduction, they impose new taxes ! Do these Congressmen talk and act in the same manner ? To quote Khan Bahadur Kalifulla "their percepts and practices differ."

IV

Temple entry rights for the Harijans of Malabar is yet another so called reform of the Congress Ministry. I call it a legislation of clear nightmare. Mr. M. C. Rajah the distinguished Harijan leader of the Legislative Assembly wanted to move a bill aiming at removal of civil disabilities for his people throughout the Province. But the Congress Government wanted him to withdraw the bill on the plea that Government had already in view some kind of a bill to help temple entry. Mr. Rajah did that. Then came the announcement that the Government wanted to introduce Temple entry measure only in Malabar. That surprised the people and reformers. On the other hand, orthodox Hindu leaders of the type of the *Zamorin* Rajah of Calicut protested. *Zamindars* and landlords of Malabar opposed the measure. They questioned the sanction behind such a measure.

In Malabar the vast majority of Hindu temples are owned by *Zamindars* and men of wealth. These are private property and the Temple Entry Bill will not affect these temples. The remaining few temples, indeed very few in number could be opened to the Harijans according to the Bill if only the vast majority of people favoured the move. The bill seeks to gauge public opinion on the questions and then enforce the same accordingly. The position of the Harijans therefore actually changes in no way by this Bill and no harm would have befallen them, had this bill been not passed at all. Nor by passing it has any new boon been

conferred on the Harijans of Malabar to cheer their heart.

After all " there was everything else but God in most temples of the Presidency " as Dr. T. S. S. Rajan, the Minister of Public Health would tell us. " The attrocities committed in the name of God in the temples have no parallel anywhere in the world " he views. As such I wonder whether any Harijan soul would be saved by entering any temple in Malabar if Harijans do not in the ordinary course of affairs get salvation by not entering these temples.

The Congress Ministry had to pass this legislation only to answer Mr. Rajah's Bill, there need not be any doubt. If he had been silent, this bill would never have seen light. This is a half-hearted measure reluctantly introduced by the Congress Ministry. Mr. Rajagopalachari has a few remarks to make abont this Temple Entry affair. He said at Kumbakonam in June last that

> " temples would be opened to Harijans only when people opened their hearts and supported the measure.........support should be overwhelming for Temple-entry."

But which section of the people of South India refuses to open their heart ? The middle and poor class Non-Brahmins do not mind in the least Harijans entering any temple. Many Brahmins and wealthy class of other Hindus are reluctant to support the measure, the former on account of religious prestige and the latter on account of social prestige.

> "Prohibition, Debt Relief Bill and such measures would not prove the influence of the Congress and of the Congress Ministry unless temple entry was accomplished."

Says Mr. Rajagopalachari. True, Prohibition and Debt Relief are two measures which alienated the sympathy of a section of people against the Ministry. And Mr. Rajagopalachari does not want to introduce Temple Entry on a Province wide basis because he does not want to lose the favour of a still greater number of people against his Ministry. This is the plain fact.

In one of his speeches he has stated:

> "So long as I am in charge of the administration of the Province I cannot avoid doing a thing in which I have complete belief and faith. I will not be true to myself and to my principles if I do not put into practice those principles".

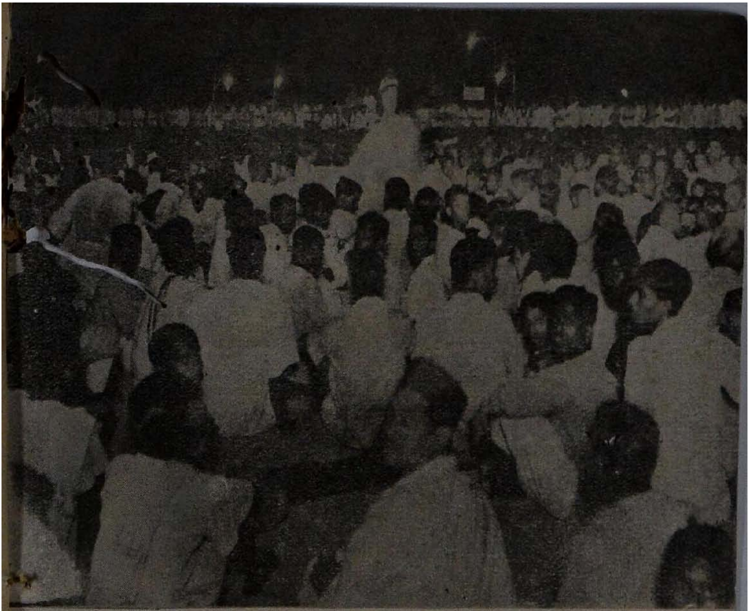
Now the Temple Entry is one thing in which he has complete 'belief and faith' I suppose. Why not then put it into practice by straightaway introducing legislation to effect throughout the Province? Fear, again fear is checking his path towards a reform of which he has so eulogistically spoken time and again. Only a stronger man than Mr. Rajagopalachari can do any real justice to the Harijans over the Temple Entry measure, if at all it is a reform to benefit the Harijans!

V

Now we come to a very important measure of the Congress Ministry, namely, the introduction of compulsory Hindi in Schools. This act of the Ministry has given rise to grave issues and a picketting campaign is

afoot in this Province. It has also given a clean test to the Congress Ministers who always claimed themselves defenders of Civil liberty. The opposition to the compulsory introduction of Hindi is overwhelming. As early as August 1937, that is just a month after Congress took up office, I noticed even in small villages in the Trichinopoly District placards bearing Anti-Hindi slogans. Mr. Rajagopalachari, intoxicated with the powers of office and the strength of his majority in the legislatures never paid any serious attention to the problem. He could have, in diplomatic-style called for the leaders of the Anti-Hindi Movement in time and discussed the matter with them and come to some amicable settlement. Perhaps he estimated his official prestige too high and believed that his political opponents were not lawyers like himself. It used to be said that Asquith never recognised merit in any one unless he was a Barrister. Did Mr. Rajagopalachari feel the same I wonder? The more he ignored the Anti-Hindi Movement the more it grew in strength.

Again the Congress Ministers, instead of adopting a concilliatory tone in their speeches while dealing with this problem began to talk in a manner unworthy of tactful politicians. Mr. Rajagopalachari had called the Anti-Hindi Campaigners a "handful of them". If so, he could have been able to by now "crush" them as another Minister said. "Worse than criminals", "opportunists", "ants from a hole" these are some of the epithets by which Congress Ministers have referred to the Anti-Hindi campaigners from time to time. In



An opposition Mass Meeting in Madras

brief, the Ministers appear to reek vengence on their political opponents by referring to them in silly terms and by insulting their sentiments rather than trying to really bring about a solution of the problem.

Some of the methods of the Anti-Hindi campaigners deserve to be condemned. One of them, a Mr. "Stalin" Jagadeesan gave us the show of a hunger-strike drama for a time. Some others went to annoy the Premier near his residence in Thyagarayanagar. They called it *Satyagraha*, a term which is all nonsense. The days of *Satyagraha* are dead. We want fighters in this country. We do not want any satyagrahis or sanyasins. Their age is over. In this era of progress we want real he-men, no *Tapasis*. The Anti-Hindi campaigners soon gave up *Satyagraha* before the Premier's cottage and resorted to a different method after some time. They went near schools and cried out "Down with Hindi" "Long live Tamil". The police arrested them and the Magistrates sentenced them to long terms of imprisonment. The trial Magistrates while convicting them made long-winding speeches from the Bench on such subjects as "clean citizenship," "obedience to law", the "cult of the *Sanyasin*", the "Duty of youth" and so on! Because, a sanyasin, youths, lawyers, all happened to be arrested and jailed for Anti-Hindi activities. These court-trials of the Anti-Hindi agitators on the whole were interesting news in the daily press althrough.

The Congress government view that a common language is essential for India and that Hindi is the fit one for adoption. Of course the ideal of having a

common language is a good one but it cannot be easily accomplished. Hindi is spoken in different ways in different parts of Upper India. The Madras Ministers do not tell us which particular type in use there, our children ought to learn. Indians are as sentimental about their mother-tongue as they are of their religion. As such, when the Congress Ministry in South India compells little children to learn Hindi, the Tamilians feel upset. They fear that their language would gradually lose its importance and then become unprogressive. Against this coming catastrophe they fight to-day. But the Congress Ministers have different views. They say that Tamil would continue to have its importance in spite of the coming of Hindi. These differences among the supporters and opponents of Hindi have raised an ugly political situation in South India to-day.

> "This Anti-Hindi controversy is not a fight between Hindi and Tamil but between liberalism and narrow-mindedness" says Mr. Rajagopalachari and adds that "nothing is going to shake us from this proposal."

With equal vehemence the leaders of the Anti-Hindi Movement say that they would continue their fight to the finish and bury the Government order introducing compulsory Hindi in Tamil Nad's schools ten fathoms deep. So the tug-of-war continues.

> " If a small number of people wanted to prevent a popular Government put in office by the majority of the people from carrying out its ligitimate duties then that Government could use any provision of the law or any other weapon available to carry out such duties"

says Mr. Rajagopalachari in a speech justifying his policy of arrests and convictions of Anti-Hindi workers.

The British Government was popular in the Punjab during the first two or three years after the Great war. The Non-co-operation Movement in the meantime began giving trouble. Gen. Dyer under the cover of Martial law shot down the agitators. Was he in any way wrong if Mr. Rajagopalachari's argument is sound enough?

The introduction of the Criminal Law Amendment Act to deal with the Anti-Hindi campaigners is the worst folly of the Congress Ministers in office. No true historian of the future will leave them alone easily for this first rate blunder the Ministry has committed. When the British Government employed this Act to deal with Congressmen it was called 'Satanic'. How conveniently Mr. Rajagopalachari who is a high priest of the Congress organization defends himself now for using it every day against a peaceful batch consisting of three or four Anti-Hindi campaigners who merely shout "Down with Hindi"! Lord Morley once wrote to Viceroy Minto enquiring whether it was true that boys who threw stones at windows in Bombay were awarded "thundering sentences" and sent to penal servitude in prisons for life and if so, that should be stopped. But here in Madras, under a "popular Government" as the Premier calls his Ministry, youths who shouted out the mere slogans "Down with Hindi" and "Long live Tamil" are sent to several months of hard labour after a lecture from much-talking Magistrates!

Mr. Rajagopalachari has been condemned from one corner of India to another for introducing the 'Satanic measure' of Criminal Law Amendment Act. The press throughout India has criticised him. I give below a few press criticisms against his defence of the Act.

> "However the Madras Premier who is a very shrewd lawyer and debator may try to defend his action, it is as clear as day light that the use of the Criminal Law Amendment Act in putting down the Anti-Hindi Agitation is open to serious objection from the Congress point of view and we should not be surprised if Mr. Chari is called upon to explain his defiant attitude by some younger or leftist element in the All-India Congress Committee"
>
> *National Call, Delhi.*

> "Need we say that by using this (Criminal Law Amendment Act) and other repressive measures and by publicly defending their use the Congress is not only undermining its moral prestige and authority but sapping the very foundation of democratic ideas in men's minds?"
>
> *Tribune, Lahore.*

Dr. Tagore, Mr. Md. Ali Jinnah, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, Dr. Khare, all these Indian leaders of repute have attacked Mr. Rajagopalachari for using the Act. But he is adamant. He would not yield. He will stand all the attacks and maintain the use of the Act! So it seems!

But Mr. Rajagopalachari has always the support of his supreme leader and relative, Gandhiji. Mahatmaji

in one of his statements to the public justifies Mr. Rajagopalachari's attitude thus :

> "I see from Rajaji's public declarations that it (the Act) contains a few sections which suit the new situation that the Congress is facing. If such is the case, Rajaji will be foolish if he does not make use of them."

Mahatmaji adds :

> "The objectionable clauses of the Act should be repealed."

Is not the Penal Code sufficient to deal with the Anti-Hindi Campaigners ? In the Mahatma's opinion "Rajaji will be foolish if he does not make use" of the Act ! Well, what about the advice to repeal atleast the "objectionable clauses"? Has Mr. Rajgopalachari cared to even respect Mahatmaji's advice in this ? No, not so far !

One cannot but be dismayed at Gandhian ways and leadership. Mr. Ramanathan, the Publicity Minister, once said that in his "humble opinion, Mahatma Gandhi's leadership is driving India towards the catastrophe of National Self-Immolation." Gandhiji's views of the kind he expressed on the working of the Criminal Law Amendment Act in Madras are also driving India to doubt his sense of justice.

While justifying Mr. Rajagopalachari in using the Act against utterly peaceful Anti-Hindi Campaigners in Madras, Mahatmaji felt that "the common law of the

State is enough to deal with the individuals using violent language or resorting to actual violence " in Travancore! What a partiality the Saint of Sheagon shows between Mr. Rajagopalachari and Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the reader may well consider. Sir Ramaswamy Iyer had the good sense to repeal the Act in Travancore but Mr. Rajagopalachari continues to use it! Mahatmaji has perhaps no more advice to offer the Madras Premier?

One of the features of the Anti-Hindi Movement has been its support gained from women in South India. They once held a momoth conference in Madras. Many of them went near schools and shouted out " Down with Hindi " and got sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. It was a pathetic sight to see many of them having infants in arms, standing a trial in the dock. They cheerfully preferred to go to prison, for, they believed that they cannot allow the introduction of Hindi to dominate their mother-tongue Tamil.

Another argument brought forward by the Congress Ministry is that the Andhras do not oppose compulsory Hindi. Has not the distinguished Sir K. V. Reddy, a hundred per cent Andhra, voiced strong protest in this connection? Years back, a venerable congress leader in the late Mr. D. Gopalakrishnayya wrote:

> "If Hindi succeeds English in the conduct of our affairs, hence forward, we Southerners especially will be sufferers and have perhaps to endure some more centuries of mental and moral slavery, language being the breath of life".

Even to-day many Andhras are writing to the press opposing compulsory Hindi. If they have not seriously organized any agitation against the Congress Ministry it is only because they are confident that Hindi would not be employed as a State language when the Andhra Provinces becomes an established fact.

Now what of the future? There is no other go for the Congress Ministry than to retreat its step and take in the popular will of the Tamils and withdraw the Act introducing compulsory Hindi. There is no loss of face in bending down to meet a popular demand. The Ministry ought to do this in a spirit of sportsmanship. On much smaller issues the Rajagopalachari Cabinet has retraced its steps. Why not then withdraw compulsory Hindi in South India's Schools?

When the Viswakarmas agitated, the Government yielded and restored to them the title "Viswa Brahmins". When the Moslems protested, the *Vande Mataram* song was withdrawn from the Assembly proceedings. The Government order suspending scholarship for backward class Christians was changed and the old order giving them that privilege was restored to after representation. Again, when the Congress Ministry introduced a novel system of selecting Public Prosecutors in the Provinces, that created an uproar from the lawyers. Even that was then changed. If Mr. Rajagopalachari could feel that he has erred in all these, why not he plainly confess that he was in error in forcing also Hindi on unwilling South Indians? He would do well to take in the advice of at least his friendly

critics like Mr. T. R. Venkatarama Sastri, the Liberal Party leader and Dewan Bahadur Bashyam Iyengar, the Harijan Service Society President in Madras and make Hindi an optional item in the study list of schools. As years roll on, when education among people has advanced, then we shall think of a common language for India. Then also shall we sit up and decide whether Hindi ought to be the most acceptable language to share the honour.

There are some other items of work about which the Congress Ministry feels so proud. One is the removal of the Neill Statue from Mount Road, Madras. It appears that some misguided youths once wanted its removal from the Public thoroughfare. That is an old story. The Congress Ministry on assuming office removed the Statue and sent it to the Musuem. A Premier who removed a Statue to please the sentiments of a handful of Congressmen, could easily remove the objectionable compulsory Hindi rule from the Statute Book and please millions of Tamilians !

The Congress Ministry has made "Viswakarmas", "Viswa Brahmins." Similarly they ordered "Tinnavelly" to be known as "Thirunelveli"! They also passed orders that "Sri" be used as a prefix to personal names instead of "M. R. Ry", "Mr" and so on! Are these also proving the reformist zeal of the Congress Ministry ?

One of the soundest ideas which ever struck the Congress Ministry is the recently passed Public Health Bill. To the English educated Indian, it appears

to be a reform of much importance and therefore welcome. What then of the vast mass of illiterates? Would they understand the Bill properly? The penal character of some sections of the Bill could well have been eliminated. Or the Bill could have been passed into two parts, introducing a few sections first and then the serious of the clauses in it next! By doing so, the masses could have got sufficient opportunity to know all about it.

Since the Congress Ministry came to power, one deplorable feature in the every day life of this Province has been labour trouble. It has become almost a daily occurrence to see factory workers on strike parading the streets in the City of Madras. In all, there have been 78 labour strikes in the Madrar Presidency in 1938. At no time, such a record has been reached. And it is a wonder to me why the Congress Ministers could not avoid these troubles. Mr. Giri who has devoted a life time for the study of Labour questions is indeed an able man. But I do not know whether he is free to act all by himself in solving the problems facing South Indian workers.

Taking stock of all the legislation the Congress Ministry has introduced, one cannot but feel that they have been radical in their attitude, paying no serious attention to the actual conditions under which the masses in South India live. The Debt Relief Bill, the Prohibition Act, the Compulsory introduction of Hindi, the Malabar Temple Entry Bill, all have been serious controversial measures. As such, many who once felt that they could give congressmen a chance to rule

have now begun to feel that they are no good as competent administrators. It is for the Congress Ministry to carefully examine the *pros* and *cons* of each future legislation they attempt and af the same time consider in what measue it would be viewed by the vast majority of the people who sent them in to rule. If they disdain public opinion and act either to satisfy only the Congress Working Committee or their election pledge sheet, the Ministry is bound to fall and fall miserably flat. To rise it up once again would be a dream and a delusion.

OPPOSITION

In 1937 January, the Congressmen were in great spirits over their election victory. Only Seventeen Justice Party men were elected to the Legislative Assembly in the last elections. The greatest enemy of the Congress Party having been thus humbled by an election defeat, the Congressmen thought that they had no real opposition in South India whatsoever. The Justice Party was dead, the Congressites clamoured. Mr. Satyamurthi indeed claimed that he had buried the Justice Party ten fathoms deep! He forgot all about the theory that what goes down must come up too. He also forgot that Parties survive the causes they serve. To-day I do not know what he feels about it. But the resurrection day for the Justice Party has already arrived. To this view I came after I had seen the last successful Conference of the Justicites during Christmas week. The party is gaining gradual strength and I will not be surprised if the Justicites soon give a tough fight to the Congress in the coming days. The Anti-Hindi League is yet another organization which is affiliated to the Justice Party, I believe. Both these Parties have organized a Province-wide opposition to the Congress Ministry. For this, the Congress Ministry itself is responsible by passing many controversial legislations and thereby courting unpopularity.

I have met some of these men who are constantly opposing and criticising the Ministry. Mr. E. V. Rama-

swamy Naicker of Erode is a very important leader. He is to-day a Martyr in the eyes of the Tamils. His portraits are hung in reverence in many homes, as Gandhiji's used to be hung in the Non-co-operation days. Mr. Naicker left the Congress because he felt that Brahmins were "controlling and enslaving Non-Brahmin Congressmen". Since then he has been a fighter for communal justice. My impression of him is that he is a fearless worker who has no selfish ambitions in life. He has no aim at becoming the Premier of his Province nor does he want strife and struggle. But as a Radical he stands for equal justice, liberty and fair treatment of one and all in South India. With such laudable motives he had been working in the interest of his people, the Tamilians.

When he was arrested in November 1938 and tried, he said that he was a believer in non-violence. The charge against him was that he extolled those who went to prison in the Anti-Hindi Movement and exhorted others to follow their ways. He did not defend himself in Court. The Magistrate made his usual sermon-like speech about the Anti-Hindi Movement and sentenced him to one year's hard labour and a fine of Rs. 1,000. *The Indian Express* of Madras, the well known Congress daily in the course of a brilliant leaderette described the punishment awarded as "barbarous". The paper wrote:

> "A fine of Rs. 1,000 we regard as a barbarous one. English courts rarely inflict fines of more than a few pounds for the most heinous offences. Have

Mr. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker

> our Government conceived the bright idea of extracting revenue from the purse of their political opponents in exchange for the Criminal Law Amendment methods ?"

Commenting on the sentence, that fearless Newspaper *Bombay Sentinel* wrote as follows :

> "The Accused (Mr. Naicker) did not picket the Premier's house nor did he break any other law to deserve the 'thundering sentence'"

Throughout the Province public opinion condemned the 'barbarous' sentence awarded to Mr. Naicker. Then the Government realized the folly and issued a communique making the one year's hard labour awarded to him into one of Simple imprisonment. But that professed graceful act of the Government never changed the views of the people on the course of justice given to Mr. Naicker.

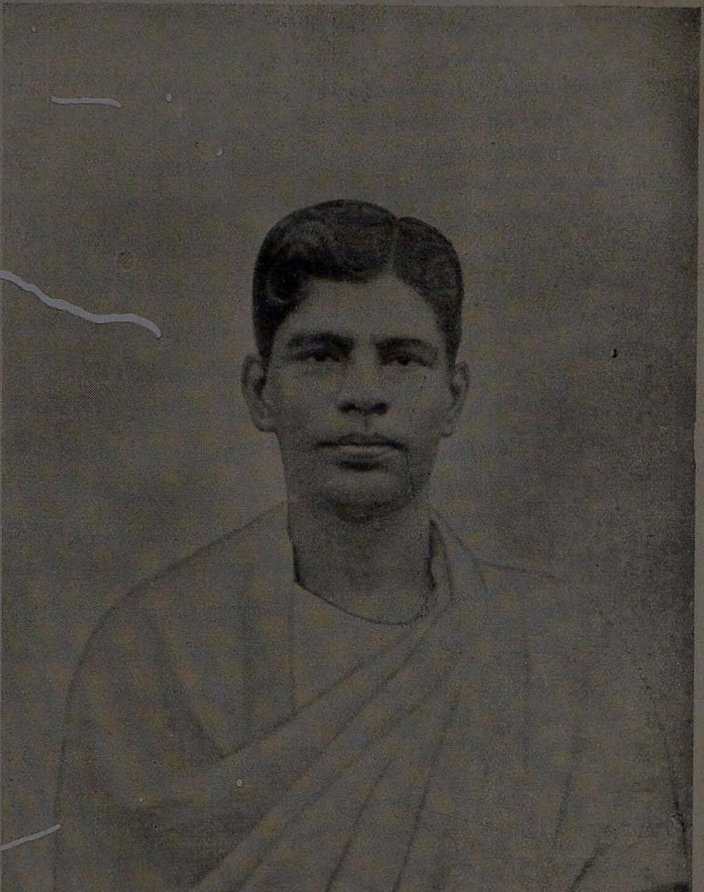
By imprisoning Mr. Naicker the Congress Ministry has helped to raise him only to greater eminence. Now people come to admire the fighter from Erode more and more and they respect him as a Saint and Saviour and call him "Periar", a title whether greater than that of "Mahatma" I am not the man to judge.

Sir A. T. Pannirselvam is another trenchent critic of the Congress Government. He had the opportunity for a good Cambridge education and did fairly well as a Barrister in Tanjore District. He early identified himself with the Justice Party. At Tanjore he was Public Prosecutor for a time, Municipal Chairman and District

Board President. He represented the Indian Christians in the Round Table Conferences held in England to shape the Government of India Act of 1935. He was appointed Home Member to the Government of Madras in 1934 and was knighted later. Without Sir Pannirselvam's speeches the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly would be poorer. He has the gift for grasping affairs correctly and talk about them with courage and frankness. I first met him in 1935 when he was a Member of the Governor's Executive Council and came away with a favourable impression. He has made many sharp attacks against the Congress Ministry, attacks levied justly. He is a follower of Mr. Ramaswamy Naicker and strives to defend the legitimate rights of the Tamilians.

I have met but once Kumaraja Muthia Chettiar, the leader of the Opposition. He is the personification of dignity. After a college education in Madras, he entered public life. Twice he was Mayor of Madras even before he was thirty. Twice he was also a Minister of the Madras Government, once during the Chief Ministership of the Rajah of Bobbili and then in the short-lived Interim Ministry. He identifies himself actively with the Justice Party's work to-day.

One of the most remarkable figures who is in the opposition group to the present Ministry outside the legislatures is Mr. K. A. P. Viswanathan of Trichinopoly. A prominent tobacco merchant, he has been a staunch Justicite during the past ten years. Like Nehru, he is steadfast to his principles and never wavers with them. I first met him a couple of years ago and talked with



Mr. K. A. P. Viswanatham

him. I was astonished by the fertility of his brain. His education was wholly in Tamil but that does not dwarf his sharp intellect. Well informed on all affairs, he is brief, witty, impressive and convincing in his talks. A fine orator in Tamil it is a pleasure to hear him treat a subject in a most original and interesting manner. With all that, he is a born fighter and he employs all the available resources at his command to carry on a fight. Had he some college education he would have been easily counted as one of our ablest politicians in the whole of India.

Mr. Palat is the son of that distinguished Judge and statesman the late Sir C. Sankaran Nair. He contributes his share in the Legislative Assembly to keep the opposition lively by making a few clean-cut and substantial speeches. He is yet another active leader who opposes the Congress Ministry.

Sir P. T. Rajan is a gentleman of the type rare to find among Tamilians. I have admired some of his speeches as worthy of permanent preservation. He does not wish the Congress Ministry to go out of office but wants the Ministers to rule in a way satisfying to the people. He is not very active in politics to-day but he identifies himself with the Justice Party in all its working.

Khan Bahabur Khalifulla who was a member of the Interim Ministry in April, 1937 is yet another vehement critic of the Congress Ministry. He opposed the move for introduction of Hindi in South Indian Schools even before the Congress Government actually introduced

the measure. He continues to fight the compulsory Hindi move. Often he speaks in mass meetings in fluent Tamil in an impressive manner.

There are some of the leaders who constitute the day-to-day opposition group to the working of the Congress Ministry in South India. They are in no way less influential with the people than those who hold Ministerial positions. Their prestige with the masses continues and they are held in great regard by a large section of the people. Their Party shows signs of revival. With adequate funds for propaganda, they should gain strength and set up a hard time to the Congress Party in the coming years.

The Justicites have only five newspapers to back them up in the Province as against the dozens of papers which blindly bind themselves to all that the Congress Ministry does. They have no adequate funds to organize their party in the districts and villages. But they have sympathy and support from the masses, at least they are re-gaining that nowadays. Their present activities are carried on through platforms and the five newspapers they have, such as the *Viduthalai*, *Kudi-Arasu*, *The Justice*, the *Sunday Observer*, and the *Nagaradutan*. The rise of the Justice Party means an effective opposition party, without which no democracy can soundly function. Therefore we ought to welcome its growth.

The Congress Ministers have been vociferously telling audiences everywhere in South India that they

are 'popular.' Congress newspapers while reporting their speeches have time and again written :

> " Then the Minister spoke of the achievements of the Congress Ministry "!

This is not to tell the truth completely. Neither the Congress Ministry is fully popular with all sections of South Indians nor any of the so-called " achievements " of the Ministry so far deserve to go on the pages of history with any commendable remarks.

Last July, Mr. Rajagopalachari toured the Andhra Districts and had to address a gathering of medical students at Vizagapatam. The students continued to interrupt his speech and jeer at him with cat-calls. So the Premier asked them ;

> " I find that many of you, if not all of you do not agree with me ".
>
> Shouts of " Yes, all of us ".
>
> The Premier : " I am very pleased to hear that all of you disagree with me. If all of you do not trust me, then goodbye ".

Then the Premier left the meeting, says a Press Report.

" The Premier of Madras is not in love with the Andhras " is a statement which Mr. Thirumal Rao, a popular Andhra leader who is also a member of the Central Legislature at New Delhi has made.

Further, the Premier's meetings were interrupted wherever he addressed the Andhras, during that tour six months back. Still, on his return to Madras he told an *Associated Press* Reporter that his Ministry was "very popular" in the Andhradesa!

If the Andhra people had not actually come out to censure the unpopular legislations of the Congress Ministry, it is because they are actually working for their own province, which they know how to govern. For the present they are charitably indifferent about the Madras Ministry.

'TOO MUCH TALK'

Congressmen in South India are well known for talking a lot. God knows from where they get their reservoir of energy. Call upon a Congressman to deliver an extempore speech on any subject under the sun, he cheerfully does that at once. Whether his talk is sensible or his speech is worthy of being looked into even the very next day, that is entirely a different matter. We have nothing to complain of when a "four-anna" Congresman does this. But what of these Congress Ministers? They too have been talking, talking and talking in season and out of season about everything on earth. Thanks indeed to my Lord, now their speeches are few. One wit asked me the other day "whether they have after all exhausted their talking material completely."

A Cabinet Minister's speech should have much importance. As such, he should at no time make filippant speeches. He must think ten times before uttering a single sentence. But none of these considerations seem to have ever weighed in the eyes of the Congress Ministers in Madras.

One Briton compiled a "Speech Biography" of Lord Buckmaster. Reading it one understands the man, his mind, philosophy and thoughts. I wish to present the reader with some of the platform utterances of our Ministers, so that they, their mind and thoughts could be

well-understood. To begin with, I shall give out the sayings of Mr. Rajagopalachari, who has by the way, translated into Tamil the sayings of Marcus Aurelius.

To an infuriated mob of Andhras who persistently interrupted one of the meetings he addressed, he said :

> "You do not know the clay of which I am made. If you think that you can extract work from me by such bitterness it is quite likely that you will fail in your hurry to make me work in the matter" of Andhra Province.

The attitude of the Premier seems to be a threat to the Andhras. I do not know how the Andhra people themselves took it.

At Guntur he once played on the delicate feelings of women who were gathered to hear him and flattered them saying :

> "You are better off than women in other countries" and added "at the same time, you have to improve your education"!

God knows the truth and our feminist leaders too, that compared to other countries the lot of the Indian women is in no way better off. Perhaps Mr. Rajagopalachari who has not been anywhere outside India is not the proper man to make a comparison of the kind he did!

In July last he told the following to a group of lawyers at Guntur :

> "If you are able really to carry on your profession properly you should have been able

> to judge me by now and I tell you, you have not judged me. If you have not understood my mind, you should excuse my saying that you have still to gain experience in the judgment of men and minds ".

What a boast about his own supreme person and the utter recognition of merit in the other members of the profession to which he himself once belonged! Such statements can never come out of the lips of any experienced statesman in any part of the world.

When Sir Pannirselvam complained in a speech on the floor of the legislature that the claims of the Indian Christian Community on the Ministry was ignored, the Premier vaguely replied :

> " Remedies were open to a party or group or a country which suffered under disability."

What the remedy was, he never told Sir Pannirselvam, nor could he give a convincing reply to the Justice Party leader who voiced the feelings of the Indian Christian community of which he was a member.

If people had grievances Mr. Rajagopalachari wants them to complain to the Government. About this, he told a Mangalore audience as follows :

> " If anything happens anywhere the best course is not to hold a public meeting but to complain about it to your Government ".

And yet he made his Publicity Minister issue a Press note saying that the Premier's mail was heavy and that people should not write to him direct on everything.

Indians, as a rule, do not rush to hold public meetings until they find that persuation and petition brought no result. Mr Rajagopalachariar wants no public meetings where anything could be said against his Ministry. It is so well known. But then he must also act in a manner that no cause for people's resentment against his ways arose.

> "I am working with the strength of popular opinion" said the Premier to an audience in Bellary in July 1938 and went on:
>
> "As long as the people give me strength I will be respected by the Governor of Madras and the King of England and everybody. If not, they will throw me into the waste-paper basket".

So, it is only the approbation of the Governor of Madras and the King of England that Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar has in mind, as the result of popular support to his regime! He is better off in expressing it than that Canon-like Congressman Mr. Satyamurthi who said before the general elections that he wanted the Policeman to salute Congressmen! Policemen now do it to Congress Ministers of course and Mr. Satyamurthi has perhaps seen the summit of his ambition through the last election victory. Great men these Congressites are!

"We do not know where our office files go to" complained Mr. Gopal Reddy in a speech. Where, where indeed have they gone? It was just his job to answer the question himself after finding out the

destination of the files with the help of the C. I. D. about whom Mr. Reddy's chief once said :

> " We can no more do away with the Criminal Intelligence Department than we can do away with intelligence itself ".

Dr. Subbaroyan, the Education Minister in one of his apologistic speeches justifying the compulsory introduction of Hindi in Schools told an interrupter that he sent " his children to England to learn as many languages as possible ". Not a bright idea any way and very expensive too ! We have right here in Madras competent men to teach all the Indian languages and such occidental languages as English, Italian, French, German, Greek and Spanish. I do not think that the Minister was particular to educate his children in Russian, Swedish, Norwegian or Bohemian languages.

Still to quote another Minister's speech in Kumbakonam in October 1938. This time it is the venerable Dr. T. S. S. Rajan, chief of the Health Ministry. He has chosen the Press for his victim. Said he :

> " The press little imagined that a 'crank' like Mr. Rajagopalachari would become Prime Minister and much less, did it expect me, a chip of that old block to become a Minister. You might wonder why the press should be angry with the Ministry for introducing Prohibition. It is true that the toddy-tapper and renter and all the rest who thrived on selling drink have reasons to be angry but what is the reason for the press to turn hostile ?
>
> " The Prohibition of Liquor advertisements, even of medicated wines had caused a big hole in

> the advertisement revenue of newspapers. Newspapers never expected that would come to pass and hence their antagonism to the Ministry ".*

Commenting on the speech as a piece of "Malice" the *Madras Mail* which is an independent paper with no party feelings in Indian Politics editorially wrote as follows. The Comment is interesting. Hence I reproduce it fully :

> "Dr. T. S. S. Rajan has celebrated the first anniversary of Prohibition in the Salem district and its extension to other areas by an attack upon the press, which he claims, is hostile to the Ministry because it lost revenue by the Prohibition of the advertisement of liquor. It appears to be a common failing in India to impute motives to those who hold views different from one's own. There is a talk of subsidy, blackmail, vested interests, etc. But it is extremely regrettable that the habit of making irresponsible charges has spread to a member of a responsible Ministry. If, in his own profession, Dr. Rajan met a consultant who expressed a diagnosis different from his own, would he suggest that his brother doctor was influenced by malicious motives, annoyed, say, because Dr. Rajan had 'stolen' a wealthy patient from him in the previous year? Fortunately if criticism can be rebutted only by attacks upon the good faith of the critics, the less gullible members of the public are likely to come to feel that the criticism is justified. But the press does not need such involuntary assistance. It is enough if the public examine its criticisms on their merits ".

Dr. Rajan has simply mislead his audience about the motives of the press and its functions. The dozens of Congress newspapers are still blind supporters of

the Ministry with the exception of the *Indian Express* which nowadays takes a very sane, independent and fearless attitude in commenting on current matters of public interest. And I do not think many of these Congress organs got liquor advertisements even before the Congress Ministry came into power. Further, the advertisement revenue from liquor-selling firms come to a very negligable proportion of a newspaper's revenue in South India. And the Newspapers do not mind in the least to lose that item of advertisment income either. Newspapers have no vindictive spirit, as some of our politicians have. It is unfortunate that Dr. Rajan conceived an entirely wrong notion about the newspapers.

Even Mr. Rajagopalachari was alleged to have expressed some such view once before and the *Madras Mail* demanded an explanation. But the Premier in a letter to the *Mail* promptly denied having made any such statement anywhere. Now comes Dr. Rajan who shows his wrath by attacking such of those newspapers which voice independent and impartial views.

In foreign countries politicians keep the pressmen in good humour and accommodate them. The Congress Ministers in Madras publicly attack newspapers and treat all newspapermen, except their own favoured hundred percent congressites as "Pariahs"! Still, the newspapers are actuated by no other motives in dealing with public questions and the conduct of the Ministers, other than a sense of justice and fair play.

I do not want to leave alone the French-bearded Maulana Yakub Hassan, Minister for Public Works either. Talking on the Anti-Hindi Movement, he said at Dindigul last June that

> "the Congress has made up its mind to put up a fight against the Anti-Hindi Leaguers and *crush* the Movement as far as possible".

I do not know whether the Maulana has changed his views by now that it is no easy task to "crush" that Movement. I believe that the Ministers are jointly responsible for the views of any of them. If that is true, it is no small wonder that Mr. Rajagopalachari in the course of a speech which he delivered on the floor of the Legislative Assembly in December last deined that the Government had any such intention of 'crushing' the Movement!

Making many astounding speeches is not the only speciality of our Congress Ministers travelling round the province at tax-payer's cost, not in their idolized "third class" in trains but in cosy second class campartments. Some of them even tell us about the shape of things to come assuming the role of Prophet H. G. Wells. For instance, I could not believe my eyes when I read Mr. V. V. Giri's statement in the press about the coming of Madras-manufactured radio sets at Rs. 30 and Indian-manufactured motor cars at Rs. 500! Verily, we are led to believe that life in South India under a Congress regime is really a life in the paradise. We wish it were really so.

OUR STORY TELLER PREMIER.

Mr. Rajagopalachari has a flare for telling small stories (or *Kutti Kathaigal*) to illustrate his arguments when he speaks in public. The meaning of many of these stories or the humour in them, if any, are not easy to be understood by one and all. Congressmen might know all that better perhaps. At Madura he said referring to the Hindi Controversy :

' Tamil is butter milk. Hindi is salt."

Hindi is really saltish as the Anti-Hindi agitation has proved and therefore, no compulsory salt (Hindi) consumption is relished by the Tamils.

At Guntur he told an audience in July last :

> " Your Premier is not only a glass tumbler but also a dealer in glass tumblers. If you deal with him harshly or roughly all the glass tumblers may be broken. Till you find another to carry the load, please treat him delicately."

Is Mr. Rajagopalachari really as delicate as a glass tumbler ? No, no, he is an iron-man with an iron-will. One has only to consider how boldly he stands all the attacks against him from all over India for using the Criminal Law Amendment Act and yet refuses to repeal it! As for another man to carry on the load of the Premier, he knows only too well that Mr. Prakasam or Dr. Subbaroyan is ready to substitute him. Then why entertain fear about the lack of a successor ?

At Anantapur the Premier described himself as a carrier of a gunny-bag full of clay pots!

At Ellore he compared the Ministry to a horse! And then sounded a piece of advice as to how the *horse* should be dealt with. Said he:

> "Treat it like a good horse. Talk to it nicely and gently and pat it gently when it slows down...... You must drive the animal through love and not by the whip. If you use the whip there is a tendency on the part of the animal to lie down stubbornly without proceeding, as troublesome horses generally do."

I shall write in the same strain in which the Premier speaks. Suppose the horse runs into the plains purposely ignoring the well-cut fine road and stamps over people, in spite of the peoples' efforts to check the progress of the horse in the wrong direction? Could you be gentle with that animal even then? Perhaps the way Mr. Rajagopalachari would deal with horses is so different from the way in which grooms and coachmen would usually deal with them!

Sometimes he goes into moods of self-confession like St. Augustine and talks out his inequities. He once said:

> "I have no experience in governing a country. I have some experience in conducting cases in courts. That experience is of no use in governing the country. The habit of speaking for a party is of no use in administration. My twenty years' experience as a lawyer at the Bar is of no use to me.
>
> "That experience obstructs me in my work. I have a tendency to take one side and talk too much.

I have to overcome that tendency as long as I am responsible for the administration of the Province.

"I am trying to see what is good for the people of my province. For want of experience, my work of Premier is specially difficult.

Inexperience does not matter. But with caution and adequate regard for the public sentiment the Congress Ministers may well go ahead and be successful.

EPILOGUE.

If all goes well, the Congressmen would be in office for the next three and a half years. Their eighteen months of apprenticeship in the Ministry is over. They should have by now known how to carry on the functions of a good Government. No good purpose would be served by their continued pleading of "inexperience" as an excuse for all their errors in office. They must show the country that they are not below the level of any other Minister in any other Cabinet. Why not the Madras Ministers work just as Dr. Khan Sahib's Ministry in the Frontier having no hitch or trouble with any sections of the people. To please and satisfy all sections of the populace as far as possible must be the chief object of any good Government. The Madras Ministry seems to have unfortunately ignored this fact altogether. No wonder then that the critics of the Government call the Madras Congress Ministry *Dictatorial* and *Nazi* in character.

Good Governments first and foremost consider the question of adequate bread for the people. The Madras Ministry has not in the least cared to plan out schemes as to how the poverty and hunger of the people could be overcome within as short a period as possible. Nothing has been done to relieve unemployment among the educated. No schemes by which irrigational facilities could be improved to increase agricultural development has been tackled. Measures to check famine, flood and

water draught in the province has never been thought of as yet. To me it strikes that these items of work to improve the economic status of the people should have been the foremost task of any good Ministry to begin with.

Instead of carrying on any ameliorative work the Ministry, swayed away by strange notions introduced several controversial legislations such as Prohibition, Debt Relief, Malabar Temple Entry and so on, removed a bronze Statue here, renamed a Town there and did much talk, long-winding talk! And we are asked to believe that never before did any good Government than that which exists to-day was ever in Madras!

Still, we must have sympathy and understanding for these Congress Ministers. With the exception of Dr. Subbaroyan in the present Cabinet none knows the art of Government backed up by any 'experience'. The Premier has time and again told us that he is an "inexperienced Minister". But please do not force unsound legislation on the Province if you want to somehow get on with all your "inexperience". I for one wish the Congress Government to go on in office only if they govern with due respect to the feelings of the masses. So far, this respect has not been shown. It is very unfortunate indeed that a Ministry which claims itself to be "popular" should alienate even the very sympathy of a large section of the people against it!

The British, Rulers of India are fair-minded in Indian politics. His Excellency the Governor of Madras

keenly watches the work of the Ministry, as he is duty bound. The Ministers are in office by popular votes. Their *Acts* and *Bills* are passed by the majority vote in legislatures. The Governor cannot but assent to these legislative measures. The reason is obvious. Only when serious questions which affect the Indo-British relationship in South India crop up would the Governor interfere. I have seen many critical views expressed in some papers about the Governor's assent to many of the controversial and unstatesmanlike legislative measures passed by the Congress Ministry. I wish such criticisms had been made after careful consideration of the existing facts. There is no use criticising the Governor, for, he is absolutely impartial and above party considerations. The Governor is duty bound to give all assistance to any Ministry in power and listen to its views. We have nothing to complain about it. But the Congress Ministers on their part do nothing to alienate the feelings of either the British Civilians or the Governor. In that lies the strength of the present Ministry. The opponents of the Congress regime should not cast reflections on the Governor or the British Civilians. Because, the Britishers are always guided by a sense of honesty, fair play and justice, which it is usually hard to find among our own people. I have scores of instances to cite and prove my contention but why waste ink in writing out all that? We all know it ourselves.

I do not know how the Province's finances stand to-day. But I have my own doubts that in the Premier we find a man who is not all-competent to deal with that

Portfolio. He is handling a very tough task by taking on his shoulders the burden of administrating Provincial Finance.

When the Congress Ministry was about to take office there were rumours that an able Madras civilian officer in Mr. N. Gopalaswamy Iyenger (who is now Prime Minister of Kashmir) would join the Congress and become Finance Minister. No one knows what actually happened about it. The rumour soon subsided and Mr. Iyengar went to Kashmir. A man of that type who had actual experience for scores of years in matters of financial policy-shaping would have done well as Finance Minister.

Mr. Rajagopalachari's handling of the Finance Portfolio has given rise to doubts in the Province. After assuming office, he has twice raised public loans, each time to the tune of Fifteen million rupees. Loans are raised by any Government either in times of war or to invest money for good Government enterprises which would show substantial returns to the Government. Why has the Premier raised loans? Has he so far launched any laudable remunerative scheme of work which at least in the years to come pay adequately if not immediately? Justifying the fifteen million rupees loan he raised in 1937, he said that the amount is "more than covered by remunerative expenditure.......incurred in the form of capital works and loans to cultivators and local bodies." A careful analysis of this statement must be made but in a brief review of the work of the Ministry, such as is undertaken in this book, I am not to enter into that task.

The Premier also makes a plea that he is losing revenue on account of Prohibition. To make up this loss he has increased the burden of the tax-payer all-round. Justifying his action, the Premier has stated that "the Previous Government got revenue from liquor" and now when he wants money he has "only to approach the poor"! Does he mean that he wants to leave the rich alone and tax the poor heavily?

We do not want surplus budgets to be produced after heavy borrowing. We do not want the budget squared up year after year after closing public schools. We are against the policy of taxing poor Paul and paying poor Peter. We would like to see our Ministers use their brain more usefully and manage the budget from the actually available revenue funds in the ordinary way. The Premier himself has once stated that his Ministry wanted to manage the financial affairs of the Province in a way as to "live within our means". But does he act in that spirit?

Methods must be found out to curtail unnecessary expenditure. That does not mean cuts in salaries and closing of schools and courts. The average educated man in South India is considering to-day that a possibility of the Province getting financially ruined should be avoided. No harm will fall on the Government if the advice of a first rate Financial expert—Indian or British—is consulted, instead of continuing "experimental measures" for which the Congress Ministry has a special flare.

The Ministry should pick up a few Congress members of the Legislatures to specialise in different branches

of administrative problems such as Finance, Land Revenue, Home Affairs, Railways, Agriculture, Defence. As it is, there is no one in the present Legislative Assembly Congress Party who has any special knowledge of any administrative problem. At least we have no evidence so far to get convinced that there is any one. That is why all these "experimental legislations"!

It is only fair to ask what the real "achievements of the Ministry" has been during the last eighteen months. What has Mr. Yakub Hasan done in his own Department inspite of his too frequent travels round the Province? Has he formulated any schemes to benefit us? What has Mr. Muniswamy Pillai done in his Portfolio? What has the rest of the Ministers like Messrs. Subbaroyan, Gopal Reddy and Giri done in their respective Departments? Mr. Prakasam and Dr. Rajan have at least a feather each in their cap with the Land Tenure Bill and the Public Health Bill. Then what of Mr. Ramanathan, the Minister without a Portfolio but commonly known as the "Publicity Minister"? The people and the newspapers expected him to do something worthwhile but all that he has been doing was to make speeches, the usual "Congress-brand" of speeches, like the rest of his colleagues in the Ministry.

All these taken into consideration, one wonders what sort of a Government these Congress Ministers are running! Certainly it has no parallel anywhere in any civilized part of the world. Perhaps the Madras Ministry wants to function in a Gandhian way? It may

be that, for, has not Mr. Rajagopalachari explained his Government as follows?

> "We took up a Government very recently. At that time many people thought many different things about it. We know nothing about *that kind of Government*. But we worked it according to our capacity and now it has begun to shape itself. The history of this, our adventure will be written at some future date. Just now we cannot do it as we are in it and I am not now free to tell you about our Cabinet secrets! But we have learnt this lesson— that a Government imposed upon us has a knack of becoming the *Government that we are fit for*"!

Is it a type of Gandhian Government that we are fit for? If so we have to seriously doubt whether any democratic government could ever be expected in our Province with a Congress Ministry in office. So the truth is out that it is some special kind of Government that Mr. Rajagopalachari is experimenting with. This must be news to all. But then the people are not concerned very much with the form of Government he choses. They want a happy state and a contented population. The Congress Government has not done anything much so far in Madras towards that ideal. If they continue at this rate in the coming years the challenge from every South Indian to the Ministry will be:

> "Govern well, if you want office or please get out, if you cannot manage".